



NEWS RELEASE

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The welfare and wellbeing of staff members and students are of paramount importance to the UG Council

Pro-Chancellor and Chairman of the Council of the University of Guyana (UG), Major General (ret'd) Joseph G. Singh, in noting the content of the press release of March 13, 2019, made jointly by the University of Guyana's Senior Staff Association and the University of Guyana's Workers' Union, has expressed his "regret at the course of action taken by the Unions to distort the outcomes of the Council meeting held on March 7, 2019, at which the Unions' representative was present and participated fully in the discussions and decisions of the Council".

Prior to this March 7 meeting, on February 15, the Pro-Chancellor had appealed to the leadership of the Unions and the Administration to return to the negotiating table in a spirit of compromise, transparency and cordiality. Additionally, three non-University members of the Council were requested to join the Administration's Team. Their collective mandate was to "address the issues that have been responsible for generating tensions, mutual distrust and aggravation, and craft a way forward that would address the concerns of both the Unions and the Administration." The Unions and the Administration agreed to recommence negotiation talks after February 21, 2019.

In keeping with the need for objectivity and transparency, the summary of the Council's deliberations on issues raised by the Unions and decisions taken at the March 7 Council meeting, were circulated to the University's community on March 11, 2019.

It must be noted that the need to have the transformation of the Personnel Division to a Human Resources Department was discussed at the meeting. Council directed that a status report must be presented at the meeting of the UG Finance & General Purpose Committee (F&GP) scheduled for Wednesday, March 20, 2019, and that the status report must be accompanied by appropriate costing and timelines for the transformation process. Council also directed that all documentation must be dispatched to members at least seven days prior (March 12) to this meeting.

At the meeting, the Council was informed that formal communication was received from the Vice-Chancellor expressing an interest in the renewal of his Contract of Engagement upon its expiration later this year. In considering this matter, the Council established a Committee to recommend to the Council the following: the criteria to be utilised in the evaluation, recommendations for the composition and Terms of Reference of the Evaluation Committee that will be appointed to conduct the evaluation process; and that the recommendations of the Committee be presented to the Council for its consideration by April 15, 2019.

The Council also noted communication from the Unions dated January 30, 2019, and had a brief discussion on the content of the letter, in spite of the absence of a quorum, but noted that some of the issues were substantially discussed as part of other Agenda Items. **However, the Chairman directed that full consideration be given to the issues raised in the Unions' letter at the upcoming meeting of the F&GPC on March 20, 2019.**

According to Pro-Chancellor, "even though the Council was prepared to facilitate a process that will enable a return to the negotiating table by the Unions and the Administration, and the Vice-Chancellor immediately after the Council meeting on March 7, 2019, issued an invitation to the leadership of the Unions to meet with him and his team on Friday, March 8, 2019, the Unions have demonstrated their lack of trust and interest in such a process". In the circumstances, the Vice-Chancellor has indicated his preference for the impasse to be referred to Ministry of Labour for conciliation. The Pro-Chancellor further stated that "the Council, now recognising that the facilitating role it has initiated, has not met with the desired response from the Unions, has no option but to acknowledge and support the decision by the Vice-Chancellor and his Administration to return to the Ministry of Labour's conciliation process.

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UG IN BRIEF

With a current enrollment of some 8,000 students, The University of Guyana (UG) has graduated more than 20,000 students who have gone on to successful careers locally, regionally and internationally. The University is also a major contributor to the national economy and to business and industry. Established in 1963 on a part-time basis with shared space at Queens College, UG moved to its own campus at Turkeyen in 1970 and expanded in 2000 with the addition of the Tain Campus. It now offers more than 120 Under-graduate and Post-graduate Programmes including the Natural Sciences, Engineering, Environmental Studies, Forestry, Urban Planning and Management, Tourism Studies, Education, Creative Arts, Economics, Law, Medicine, Optometry and Nursing. Several online programmes are available and The UG also offers extra-mural classes at four locations through its Institute of Distance and Continuing Education (IDCE). The UG also offers the opportunity for student engagement in debating, sports, and cultural, religious and professional activities.

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